

WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES

APPENDICES

[Appendix VI : Recognition of Untouchables as a Separate Element](#)

Continued...

Except for differences in the rigidity of their exclusion they are all more or less in the position of the Madras Panchamas, definitely outside that part of the Hindu community which is allowed access to their temples. They amount to about one-fifth of the total population, and have not been represented at all in the Morley-Minto Councils. The committee's report mentions the depressed classes twice, but only to explain that in the absence of satisfactory electorates they have been provided by nomination, It does not discuss the position of these people or their capacity for looking after themselves. Nor does it explain the amount of nomination which it suggests for them. Para 24 of the report justifies the restriction of the nominated seats on grounds which do not suggest that the committee were referring to the depressed classes. The measures of representation which they propose for this community is as follows;—

		<i>Total Population</i>		<i>Population of Depressed Classes</i>		<i>Total Seats</i>	<i>Seats for Depress ed Classes</i>
		<i>(millions)</i>		<i>(millions)</i>			
Madras		39	8	6.3	a	120	2
Bombay		19. 5	5		6	113	1
Bengal		48	0	9.9	9	127	1
United Provinces		47	0	10	1	150	1
Punjab		19	19.5	1	7	85	-
Bihar and Orissa		33	4	9	3	100	1
Central Provisions		12	12.2	3	7	72	1
Assam		6	0	0	3	54	--

Total	221.4	41 9	791	7
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These figures speak for themselves. It is suggested that one-fifth of the entire population of British India should be allotted seven seats out of practically eight hundred. It is true that in all the councils there will be roughly a one-sixth proportion of officials who may be expected to bear in mind the interests of the depressed ; but that arrangement is not, in our opinion, what the Report on reforms aims at. The authors stated that the depressed classes also should learn the lesson of self-protection. It is surely fanciful to hope that this result can be expected from including a single member of the community in an assembly where there are sixty or seventy caste Hindus. To make good the principles of paras 151, 152, 154 and 155 of the Report we must treat the out-castes more generously. We think there should be in each council enough representatives of the depressed classes to save them from being entirely submerged, and at the same time to stimulate some capacity for collective action. In the case of Madras, we suggest that they should be given six seats; in Bengal, the United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa, we would give them four; in the Central Provinces and Bombay two and elsewhere one. In these respects we think that the committee's report clearly requires modification.

(3)

Extract from Lord Birkenhead's speech as Secretary of State for India in the House of Lords on the 30th March 1927 on the appointment of Statutory Commission.

Let me take the case of the depressed classes. There is in India a vast population even in relation to the numbers with which we are dealing, a population of sixty millions of the depressed classes. Their condition is not quite as terrible, quite as poignant as it has been in the past, but it is still terrible and poignant. They are repelled from all social intercourse. If they come between the gracious light of the sun and one who despised them the sun is disfigured for that man. They cannot drink at the public water-supply. They must make diversions of miles in order to satisfy thirst and they are tragically known and they have been known for generations as the "untouchables." There are sixty millions of them in India. Am I to have a representative of them upon this Commission ? Never, never would I form a Commission nor would anyone in a democratic country, nor would my friends opposite recommend it, from which you have excluded a member of this class which more than any other requires representation if you are indeed to put the matter to a mixed jury of the kind I am indicating.

(4)

Extract from the Report of the Simon Commission, Vol. II.

78. In no other province has it been possible to get an estimate of the number of the depressed classes who are qualified to vote. It is clear that even with a considerable lowering of the franchise—which would no doubt increase the proportion of the depressed class voters—there would be no hope of the depressed classes getting their own representatives elected in general constituencies without special provision being made to secure it. In the long run the progress of the depressed classes, so far as it can be secured by the exercise by them of political influence, will depend on their getting a position of sufficient importance for other elements to seek their support and to consider their needs.

80. It will be seen, therefore, that we do not recommend allocating seats to the depressed classes on the basis of their full population ratio. The scale of reserved representation suggested will secure a substantial increase in the number of the M.L.C's. drawn from the depressed classes. The poverty and want of education which so widely prevail amongst them make it extremely doubtful whether a large number of adequately equipped members could be at once provided, and it is far better that they should be represented by qualified spokesmen rather than by a larger number of ineffective who are only too likely to be subservient to higher castes. The re-distribution of seats which is now being attempted among different kinds of representatives cannot be permanent, and provision must be made for its revision. But we think that our proposal is adequate for the present, especially as the representation of opinion by reservation of seats does not exclude the possibility of the capture of other seats not so reserved.

(5)

Extract from the Government of India's Despatch on Proposals for Constitutional Reform (as set out by the Simon Commission).

35. *The Representation of the Depressed Classes.*--The suggestions made by the Commission for the representation of the depressed classes have been much criticized by the provincial Governments. The difficulty of framing for each province a definition of the "depressed classes" is probably inherent in any scheme for the special representation of this class other than by nomination; but the Commission's proposals place a peculiarly embarrassing

duty on the Governor to certify candidates authorised to stand for the depressed classes ; and the proportion of representation which the Commission suggest, namely, in the ratio of three-quarters of the proportion of the depressed classes population to the total population of the electoral area of the provinces, seems likely to be unduly high. The Government of the United Provinces have calculated that in that province the Commission's proposal would result in the return to the provincial legislature of no less than forty members in place of the single nominated member who at present represents the community. The whole problem of the representation of the depressed classes will require careful investigation by the Franchise Committee ; and at this stage we only wish to make plain that in our view their adequate representation should be secured by the best means that may be found practicable. Though there are some differences of opinion within the community, recent meetings of depressed classes associations have re-affirmed their belief in separate electorates.

(6)

Extract from the Terms of Reference to the Lothian Committee (on Franchise) 1932.

3. You are aware that the present electorate in Indian provinces amounts to less than 8 per cent. of the population of the areas returning members to provincial Councils, and it is obvious that under this limited franchise, the majority of the people and many large and important sections of the community can enjoy no effective representation in the Legislatures. The principle of a responsible Federal Government, subject to certain reservations and safeguards, has been accepted by His Majesty's Government while it has been decided that the Governors' provinces are to become responsibly governed units, enjoying the greatest possible measure of freedom from outside interference and dictation in carrying out their own policies in their own sphere. In these circumstances, it is clearly necessary so to widen the electorate that the legislatures to which responsibility is to be entrusted should be representative of the general mass of the population and that no important section of the community may lack the means of expressing its needs and its opinions.

6. It is evident from the discussions which have occurred in various connections in the Conference that the new Constitution must make adequate provision for the representation of the De-profiled Classes and that the method of representation by nomination is no longer regarded as appropriate. As you

are aware, there is difference of opinion whether the system of separate electorates should be instituted for the Depressed Classes and your Committee's investigations should contribute towards the decision of this question by indicating the extent to which the Depressed Classes would be likely, through such general extension of the franchise as you may recommend, to secure the right to vote in ordinary electorates. On the other hand, should it be decided eventually to constitute separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, either generally or in those provinces in which they form a distinct and separate element in the population, your committee's inquiry into general problem of extending the franchise should place you in possession of facts which would facilitate the devising of a method of separate representation for the Depressed Classes.

(7)

Extract from the Statement issued by H. E. Lord Linlithgow the Viceroy and Governor General of India, dated 17th October 1939.

"Be that as it may, His Majesty's Government recognise that when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future federal Government of India, and of the plan destined to give effect to the Assurance given in Parliament by the late Secretary of State, to which I have just referred, it will be necessary to reconsider in the light of the then circumstances to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate.

And I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities) parties and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may seem desirable."

(8)

Extract from a Statement made on 7th November 1939 by Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India in the House of Lords.

"The Congress have further consistently taken the line, which they still maintain, that the fact that there are racial and religious minorities in India is of no relevance in that connexion, and that it has always been the intention of the Congress to secure, through the Constitution to be framed by Indians themselves, such protection for their rights as may prove acceptable to the minorities.

His Majesty's Government find it impossible to accept this position. The long-

standing British connexion with India has left His Majesty's Government with obligations towards her which it is impossible for them to shed by disinteresting themselves wholly in the shaping of her future form of Government. Moreover, one outstanding result of the recent discussions in which the Governor-General has been engaged with representatives of all parties and interests in India has been to establish beyond doubt the fact that a declaration in the sense proposed, with the summary abandonment by His Majesty's Government of their position in India, would be far from acceptable to large sections of the Indian population."

(9)

Extract from the Speech made by H. E. Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy and Governor-General at the Orient Club, Bombay, on January 10, 1940.

"Nor must we forget the essential necessity, in the interests of Indian unity, of the inclusion of the Indian States in any Constitutional scheme.

There are the insistent claims of the minorities. I need refer only to two of them—the great Muslim minority and the Scheduled Castes—there are the guarantees that have been given to the minorities in the past; the fact that their position must be safeguarded, and that those guarantees must be honoured.

(10)

Extract from a Speech made by the Right Hon^{ble} Mr. L. S. Amery, Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons on August 14, 1940.

"Congress leaders have built up a remarkable organization, the most efficient political machine in India, ..if only they had succeeded, if the Congress could, in fact speak, as it professes to speak, for all the main elements in India's national life, then however advanced their demands, our problem would have been in many respects far easier than it is to-day. It is true that they are numerically the largest single party in British India, but their claim in virtue of that fact to speak for India is utterly denied by very important elements in India's complex national life. These others assert their right to be regarded not as mere numerical minorities but as separate constituent factors in any future Indian policy. The foremost among these elements stands the great Muslim community. They will have nothing to do with a constitution framed by a constituent assembly elected by a majority vote in geographical constituencies. They claim the right in any constitutional discussions to be regarded as an

entity against the operations of a mere numerical majority. The same applies to the great body what are known as the Scheduled Castes who feel that in spite of Mr. Gandhi's earnest endeavours on their behalf, that, as a community, they stand outside the main body of the Hindu community which is represented by the Congress.

(11)

Extract from the Speech of the Right Hon'ble Mr. L. S. Amery, Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons on 23rd April 1941.

" India's future Constitution should be devised by Indians for themselves and not by the British Government. India's future Constitution should be essentially an Indian Constitution, framed in accordance with the Indian conception of Indian conditions and Indian needs. The only essential condition is that the Constitution itself and the body which is to frame it must be the outcome of agreement between principal elements in India's national life.

(12)

Extract from a Statement by H. E. Lord Linlithgow Viceroy and Governor-General, of India on 8th August 1940.

'These are two main points which have emerged. On these two points. His Majesty's Government now desire me to make their position clear. The first is as to the position of the minorities in relation to any future Constitutional scheme It goes without saying that they (H. M. Government) could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a Government."

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